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## Figure of Speech

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"Mechanic Josef Thomason. May i speak with you?"

Josef, or Joe like his friends and crew mates were calling him, looked up from the conversation he was having towards the approaching insectoid.

"Sure, Klix. What's it about?"

The short round being with a shiny green-blue carapace tilted his head while swaying his antenna and made some clicking sounds with his mandibles. Joe's translator reacted without delay, telling him what Klix was saying.

"Earlier i overheard you having a conversation with Task Manager Todd Howard and you said something that didn't seem logical. I assume you used a figure of speech, like you human call it, and i was wondering if you could explain it to me."

Ah, that made sense. The insectoid Krixix were one of the most friendly and curious races in the galaxy and no one was surprised when they were the first race to agree to the exchange program the earth government proposed, eager to learn more about the humans. And so far it went well. With the exception for one little detail.

As a hive species, the Krixix were rather literal minded and had problems to grasp the concept of idioms. Combine that with the fact, that the universal translators only translated the direct meaning of a spoken sentence and misunderstandings were guaranteed. Which was why the crew of the Aurora Borealis had to explain to their guest, Researcher Klixixdri, or simply Klix, more then once, what they meant. Which usually lead to some interesting conversations. The small group of crew members on the table was now paying attention to Klix, clearly interested of what the bug wanted to know, including Officer Irene Chiara, one member of the security team.

"Sure thing," Joe agreed. "What do you want to know?"

Klix tilted his head in the other direction before he spoke: "During your conversation with Task Manager Todd Howard, you mentioned Security Irene Chiara and commented that she was carrying a large shelf with her. But she was never seen to carry a shelf around, nor would it be part of her duties. Can you explain what you meant?"

Joe was confused. When did he ever said Irene would carry a large shelf... Ooooooh crap!

Joe's face dropped as he realized what exactly Klix was talking about. And the silence of some, as the snicker of other crew members told him that they knew as well.

"Yes Joe..." Irene said in an absolute chilling tone while she stared at him in a way that promised him a walk through the airlock if he couldn't save the situation somehow.

"What did you mean?"

Joe needed a way out. Maybe he could play dumb or convince everyone that Klix misheard.

"I... i don't think i know what you're talking about. Are you sure i meant a shelf?"

Klix seemed to think about it. Maybe Joe might actually made it out alive, despite the amusement of the crew and the very judging look from Irene. Oh and the snickering from Todd besides him, as if that idiot wasn't in danger to be thrown out of the airlock as well.

"Now that you mentioned it, it wasn't the word shelf you used," Klix finally said to Joe's relieve.

"I think you used the word 'rack'. Is it not a synonym for a shelf?"

And he was dead. Deader than dead. There was now way he could get out of this alive. Let alone with his dignity.

"Ah, i see," Joe said. "Well i wasn't really talking about a shelf... or an actual rack... but something about Officer Chiara's appearance..."

Screw getting thrown out of the airlock. Joe wanted to jump out of it himself. If he could escape Irene's wrath.

"I see. What was it, you were talking about?" Klix asked with the innocence of someone who really never had to deal with something like that, leaving Joe to struggle to find an answer.

"Well, you see... That is a little bit..."

"He was talking about her breasts!" Todd said, nudging his elbow into Joe's side like the asshole he was.

The rest of the crew clearly found that amusing as well, except for Irene, who was blushing just as much as Joe thought he himself was. And of course, Klix in his merciless naivete had to dig further.

"Why was the anatomy of Security Irene Chiara and the size of this portion of her body a topic to discuss? Is she ill?"

"What? No!" Joe nearly yelled. "No, that's not... Man how do i explain this? Eh... you did study a lot of species and their mating habits, right?"

"It is a part of my duties as a researcher drone," Klixs confirmed.

"And you know how a lot of species have something like a mating cycle?"

Klixs confirmed this again and the group around the table was waiting were Joe was going with that. Even Irene looked more curious for now, so maybe he could get out of it alive. Or at the very last, she would give Joe the chance to knock out Todd Howard first.

"Well, you see, we humans don't really have that. So we kind of notice signs of a potential mate even if we don't really looking for one."

"I see," Klixs said."Considering humans are mammals, are you saying the size of Security Irene Ciara's breasts are a sign that she would make a good mate for producing a healthy offspring?"

The entire table erupted in laughter, with Todd being the loudest, because of course he would be, while Joe was contemplating if he could reach the airlock before Irene could catch him, which was very, very unlikely. And speaking of Irene, a short glance showed, that she was again turning beet red but Joe could swear he saw a little smirk at corner of her mouth. Maybe he had a chance to get out of it alive.

"Well... not exactly. There are many other factors that can vary. And well they aren't the only thing that determine if we like someone."

"What do you mean?" Klixs asked.

The crew mates around the table were again very interested, some with clear anticipation in their eyes. And even Irene looked at Joe like she was expecting something. Joe steeled his nerves. He dug himself this deep, could as well finish the metaphorical hole he was in.

"Well... sure. Irene is good lookin. Not just.. ahem... her chest but her strong legs and arms or her hair es well."

"Don't forget her butt, you mentioned earlier," Todd chimed in.

"Thanks Todd. Why don't you go and jump out of the airlock now," Joe replied before turning back to Klixs, desperately avoiding eye contact with Irene.

"Anyways, Those are only physical traits. They're not all what makes someone attractive."

Klixx tilted his head again, his antenna swaying between Joe and Irene.

"What else would tell you, Security Irene Chiara would make a good mate?" And here they go. No turning back now.

"Well, there would be the fact, that she always has your back. I mean that she is someone you can trust with that," Joe cleared before Klixx could get confused by this idiom. "She's always honest with you, has great taste in pizza and a sense of humor. And well, the way she keeps her, honestly insane, workout routine is really amazing. Which really shows..."

Joe stopped himself and shot a quick glance towards Irene, who was blushing but also... smiling? At the very least she didn't look like as she would murder him anytime soon.

"I see," Klixx said.

"Physical signs serve to attract the attention of a possible mate, leading to discovery if social behavior is compatible which leads to emphasize physical attributes beneficial for reproduction if needed. Is this correct?"

Joe shrugged.

"Kinda...? To be honest the whole thing is complicated for us humans as well."

Klixx swayed his antenna a bit, processing the informations.

"I see. But why did you use figure of speech, when describing you attraction for Security Irene Chiara? Wouldn't it be better to announce your willingness for courtship?"

Irene turned completely red again and nearly choked and Todd was howling with laughter. The rest of the people around were either joining Todd laughing or looking at the scene with their jaws at the floor. Joe himself was blushing and needed a moment to find his words again.

"I... i mean... if i would... Okay... Give... give me a moment. God shut up Todd... Look Klixx, I said that we kind of don't have a mating cycle and we notice such things even if we don't look for a mate?"

"Yes. Does that mean you are not attracted to Security Irene Chiara?"

"What? No! Yes! I mean...argh! That's not what i'm gettin at!"

Joe took another deep breath.

"Look! The fact is, that the possible partner isn't interested in a courtship and pursuing it and talking to much about it is considered to be rude. Remember Crewman Summers, who was kicked of the ship at the station we were docking last month"

"I do," Klxxx confirmed. "He commented to some of the female crew members about their appearance. They didn't seem to like it."

Now that was an understatement. The guy was harassing every female crew member he came across to a point where Irene nearly had him thrown out the airlock if the Chief Security Officer hadn't stopped her.

"I think i understand. You used a figure of speech in order to not upset Security Irene Chiara until you could be sure, she would not be insulted."

"Eh... yeah. Let's go with that."

Joe glance towards Irene, who was shaking her head with a smirk. As she noticed him looking at her, she silently mouthed "Bullshit" which he answered with a simple shrug of his shoulder.

"Thank you, Mechanic Josef Thomasson. I appreciate your help."

"No problem," Joe said with a relief sigh. He couldn't believe he actually survived. And even with a tiny sliver of dignity. Not even Todds comment about finally admitting his crush towards Irene could bother him at this moment.

Then Klxxx turned around and addressed Irene: "Security Irene Chiara. I overheard you the other day mentioning that you suspect Mechanic Josef Thomason to hide a large male chicken in his uniform. Considering that this seems dimensional impossible, were you also referring to a part of his anatomy you deem to attractive?"